



PHILOSOPHICAL
TRANSACTIONS.

XX. *An Account of a Volcanic Hill near Inverness. In a Letter from Thomas West, Esq. to Mr. Lane, F. R. S.*

DEAR SIR,

Bath,
Oct. 27, 1776.

Read Dec. 12,
1776.

AS you seem desirous to have a more particular account of the lava, which I left at your house on my return from my tour in Scotland, I herewith send it you. At the same time I must own, that the little attention paid to so extraordinary a phenomenon, and which seems to prove beyond a doubt the existence of volcanos in this country, is to me matter of great surprize.

The hill from whence I took the specimens of lava which I have the pleasure to send you, is about a mile

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and an half distant from Inverness, and is called by the inhabitants Creck Faterick, or Peter's Rock: the lower part of it is chiefly ploughed up; the upper part is extremely steep, craggy, and very difficult of access, and appears to me to have evident marks of having been a volcano, as by much the greatest part of the largest rocks on it have been either strongly calcined or fused, as will, I think, plainly appear by these specimens, some of which I picked up on the sides of the hill, others I broke off from the solid rock with a pick-axe (though not without great difficulty, on account of the extreme hardness of the rock); and others I dug out from the summit of the hill, at the depth of four feet, lying in a rich, light, black mould, which, after having been exposed to the air for some time, turned to a whitish ash colour.

On the summit of this hill (which commands a most beautiful and extensive prospect) is a small plane, ninety paces long, by twenty-seven wide, surrounded by rocks, from six to eight feet high, like a breast-work, extremely craggy, and difficult of access on the outside, but rising from the center, in the inside, to the top of the breast-work, with a gentle slope of turf, equal to any of the finest on our sheep downs. This I at first thought might have been the crater; but the smoothness of the inside seeming not to favour this opinion, I carefully examined

every part of the hill, in hopes of finding some marks of one, but without success. There are, indeed, several small caves, but of no great depth, which seem to be formed by the hanging rocks on the sides, near the top of the hill. There is also a small spring about fifty yards from the top of the hill, but it was almost dry when I saw it, which was the latter end of July. I could not get, from the best inquiries I was able to make, any account of this extraordinary phenomenon, no person in Inverness (except one gentleman of that city) having ever taken the least notice of it; nor can I find that any mention has ever been made of it in history, though it seems probable that there has been at least one more in this part of the country; as a gentleman near Dingwall, which is about twenty miles from Inverness, assured me, that there were many stones on a hill near his house which they called the vitrified fortification, that had the same appearance with those at Creck Faterick; but that no person had ever taken any particular notice of them^(a).

I am, &c.

(a) The specimens sent with the above letter to the Royal Society, having been examined by some members well acquainted with volcanic productions, were by them judged to be real lava; and it was their opinion, that if a great quantity of the like substance be found on the hill from whence these pieces were taken, the hill most probably owes its origin to a volcano. J. P.

